YOUTH NEWSLETTER

No.7 March, 1982

My little friend, he said to her
and patted on her head
"You wait till you are older girl,
to speak of bombs and bread."

"My dear friend," she answered him.
"as old you ought to know
that wisdom's not the same as age
although it might be so.

So listen to the words I say
I want to live not die.
I want a future here on earth
not only pie in sky.

I loudly shout for real bread
of grain that's grown on earth
I need it for a friend of mine
who's starving since her birth.

I raise my voice against the bombs
I couldn't stand the thought
that everything on earth should die
in politicians' sport.

I'm young, yes, and I think.
I love. I am. I speak.
My feeling is, that deeper seen
what you call strong is weak."

"You see, when I was young," he said,
"I said the same as you.
Then came the war and I saw death
and then saw peace come true.

But now I see the nuclear arms
and people cry for food
I've lost the little hope I had
that this world could be good."

"If you have lost your hope," said she
"Don't tell me what to say.
Iwill continue to speak out
For peace on earth I'll pray."

(Note: This poem was written by Christina Lövestam. She is a research assistant to the Lutheran World Federation's women's desk in the department of studies.)

EDITORIAL by Matthias Schmale

What is the special contribution of youth to the church? Why is the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) making such a big noise about "youth concerns" or "youth input"? When I have tried to find an answer to these kinds of questions here in the Geneva headquarters of the LWF over the past months I have very often received "historical answers" : The 1977 assembly--an assembly is the highest decision-making body of the LWF--"gave us the mandate to focus on youth issues," somebody told me. "It is the will of the churches and after all we are the servants of the member churches and should implement what they tell us to do," was another answer.

Several questions or observations came to my mind when I thought about these answers. One is, who are these churches that give the LWF staff a mandate to do something? It seems that in a lot of the cases it is more the church leadership, the top executives of a church, whom we are talking about in this connection. Assuming that this is true, I have the feeling that it is this particular group which "orders" the LWF to focus on youth, without really thinking about the practical consequences. And at this point the problems begin. It is not enough to decide, even if under pressure from youth groups, to give more attention to the younger generation. One also then has to give adequate support, not only financially, to official LWF youth programs. It is this massive support from churches that I have found missing in a number of cases.

Let me give two examples: The LWF's commission on communication--a governing committee for the department of communication--has decided to focus on youth "concerns" at its annual meeting this year. When the Geneva staff tried to get youth delegates for this meeting, it turned out to be a very frustrating experience. A number of regional associations and national committees were asked to nominate candidates. A total of only seven people were nominated, which in my view gives the whole undertaking almost no chances of success from the very beginning. Second example: For the big mission meeting of the LWF's department of church cooperation, scheduled for Stavanger, Norway, this May, so far four youth have been nominated among 65 participants. The women are also very poorly represented with nine delegates. The US churches did a very smart thing--of the four women they nominated three are youth, thus killing two birds with one stone.

It is, of course, also true that the Geneva staff has partly to be blamed for showing a lack of real interest in "youth concerns." But, what is more important to me, is to point out that the Geneva staff can only be effective if they are fully supported by their constituency. If it is not possible to give this support one should stop making big decisions. To be more concrete: If churches do not find it necessary to focus on youth, they should be honest enough to admit this!

* * *

Responsible editors:

Alf Idland
Hans-Christoph Hermes
Matthias Schmale

Address:

Youth Newsletter
Department of Church Cooperation
150, route de Ferney
CH-1211 Genva 20

Again we say a big THANK YOU to Karin Kaukorat, who helped with the typing of this issue. Thank you also to our Scottish proof-readers, the Mahers.

YOUTH SHOULD INFLUENCE CHURCHES TO OPENLY CONDEMN INJUSTICE; BENGU SAYS

The contribution of youth to overcoming social-economic injustices in this world could be to actively influence their respective churches to openly condemn injustices, Dr. Sibusiso Bengu, secretary for research and social action in the Lutheran World Federation's (LWF) department of world service, said in an interview with Youth Newsletter last month. Youth could help to develop a positive attitude in the churches toward the New International Economic Order (NIEO), he said. Bengu pointed out that in the discussions involving the NIEO "it is mainly the justice issue that is important. The issue of economic justice questions should be promoted in the churches by the youth."

Bengu noted that in finding a new approach to life by developing new life styles young people can show their solidarity with the poor. He said that he is critical of the term alternative life style, which is for example frequently used in the Fed. Republic of Germany (FRG), as it suggests that Christianity leaves a choice. "There is only one simple Christian way of living," he said.

He pointed out that there are several ways of supporting the poor. There is the possibility to give them financial assistance. "But more important is to support them in their struggle for justice and liberation," he said. In Bengu's view the "churches are losing a chance if they do not openly support liberation movements."

In a paper presented to a US staff consultation on root causes of social and economic injustice late last year Bengu wrote that one of the factors which has tended to unify the nations of the South is the recognition that they shared a common plight, aptly summarized as a "vicious circle of poverty," from which few of them are likely to escape in the foreseeable future. "It is in this situation that the churches ought to be clearly the voice of the voiceless, joining to support the struggle for justice by the poor and the powerless," he said.

In his paper Bengu noted that the NIEO has not yet been fully supported by the churches, especially those that benefit from the status quo, and that the launching of "global negotiations" which would initiate new world order has been blocked by the three big powers, the FRG, Britain and the US. When asked to specify what the NIEO is, Bengu said that "we should be honest to admit that at this stage it has no content." The content would come when the present order, which should really be called a "disorder," is changed. Demands that developing countries have made since 1974 are indicative of the probable NIEO content, he said. "It is clear though that the major powers, those who for example make big contributions to the International Monetary Fund, will have to sacrifice power."

(M O R E)

Responding to a question, Bengu said that there is some truth in the fact that there is corruption and injust distribution of wealth in the so-called Third World. "But this should be attributed to the present economic order. The monopolizing of power in the Third World is a product of the present power structures," he said. Bengu noted that the NIEO should have two levels: Countries everywhere will have to restructure their economic systems both on a national and an international level.

In his paper to the US consultation Bengu describes colonialism as an "exploitive relationship between nations." Bengu wrote that the new style of colonialism is called neo-colonialism by those who find themselves the weaker partners in this deal. He pointed out that "Whether old or new style, colonialism is a relationship between two countries in which the following happens: one country uses its power to manipulate the behavior of another country in such a way that its own business interests gain access to the natural resources and markets of the manipulated country in terms which would never be tolerated if the bargaining took place between equals."

According to Bengu, churches ought to support and maybe "play a leading rôle in development and peace education programs." In his view development education programs should cover three important factors:
--widespread knowledge of the many interacting causes of poverty and exploitation,
--a general commitment to their removal, and
--an understanding of the methods and techniques required for the eradication of the root causes.

Bengu again stressed that the time has come for the churches to support the people's struggle for justice and liberation. He pointed out that in many places the church has been identified with the power groups and oppressive regimes. "However the Christian church should follow in the footsteps of its master Jesus Christ, whose life was spent in solidarity with the poor, the oppressed and the suffering. The churches should unashamedly be part of the people's struggle for liberation in South Africa and Namibia," he said. "The racist God, who is worshiped by some white Christians in South Africa should be openly renounced by all churches," Bengu added.

* * *

APARTHEID IS SIN, BISHOP BUTHELEZI SAYS

"It seems to be a particular Lutheran dilemma or problem that the Lutherans are the only ones still discussing whether apartheid is sin or not," Dr. Manas Buthelezi told a consultation last month. "Apartheid is sin. Sin is what is basically against God's will. Since apartheid divides Christians and thus the body of Christ, it is against the heart of God's will," Buthelezi, bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (ELCSA) central diocese, said. Buthelezi said it is the understanding and definition of apartheid that separates Christians in Southern Africa. "Apartheid is basically racism. It is

(M O R E)

an obsession with the factor of race," he told the consultation participants.

The black bishop noted that his generation is still open to reconciliation and church unity but that perhaps in five years time things might change. The next generation might be much more radical and might turn their back on the quest for church unity and "things will be much more difficult," he said. Buthelezi said that "to be one with somebody different may mean going through pain. The mistake often made is that unity is seen as a pleasant fellowship." Despite this the church has to be one or cease to exist, he said. Buthelezi referred to a paper he wrote for the synod meeting of a regional West German Protestant church last year, in which he said, "Racism has only one characteristic that gives it away: it is its capacity to disrupt the unity of the church. Where there is racism the unity of the church disappears. Racism is therefore an anti-church cult. It is heresy in the basic sense of the word.

"Separate houses of worship and structures of administration may be neutral in themselves, but when racism sets its idolatrous shrines in them they lose their neutrality, they become confessional symbols of a counter-church within the church of Christ. Ours is a new confessional situation. When the 20th century god of race is busy desecrating our houses of worship, we need to take a confessional stand which takes cognizance of the new forms of idolatry which were not so visible during the time of the reformers."

* * *

DOCUMENTATION: OVAMBOKAVANGO CHURCH SYNOD STATEMENT

(Editors' note: This statement was passed at the December synod meeting of the Evangelical Lutheran Ovambokavango Church, Namibia. Since we as youth see ourselves as part of the church and since this statement is addressed to churches in the world, we think it is important to publish it here.)

We, as Synod, acknowledge with deep sorrow and disappointment that during these last few years, no peaceful changes whatsoever have been brought about, and that all the good efforts which were made could not succeed in bringing our country to independence. In fact, during these few years, sufferings, persecutions and torturings are more predominant than at any time in the past. Hundreds of members of our parishes and congregations have lost their lives as a result of the prevailing sufferings and hardships of this time in our country. Some (of them) have been killed, others have died as a result of land mines which are being planted on roads.

Private houses have been put aflame and many innocent civilians have had their properties either destroyed or taken from them. Hundreds of people, both males and females have been held in jails; some whose whereabouts is still unknown. Young men are forced to undergo military training against their will. (There

(M O R E)

has been conscription since 1980.) These waves of persecutions and torturings have caused thousands of our church members and other members of the Namibian nation to become exiles through the world. Likewise those sufferings and hardships are hindering the ministry of the gospel to be carried out to such an extent that it reaches all the people.

Some of our pastors and other lay preachers have been imprisoned at one time or the other. We are not allowed to pay visits and minister to those church members who are imprisoned, nor are their family mambers allowed to visit them. Furthermore it was found out at the time of the synod session that about 13 percent of the synod's 300 delegates, both males and females, did taste the severity, harshness and bitterness of jail and torturings at one time or another. A number of the church properties were destroyed, such as the printing plant that was destroyed for the second time in a bomb blast on Nov.19,1980. In the same way also some of the inner-country mission places had been destroyed.

The synod is lodging the appeal to all those who have authority over the affairs of our country to see to it that the people of Namibia, without any further delays, will get a chance to elect their own leaders peacefully and freely by means of the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 435--ending the prolonged state of sufferings and bloodshed among our people.

In conclusion, the synod is appealing to all her sister churches all over the world to continue:
--The work of prayers and intercessions on behalf of our country and its people.

--To serve members of our churches who are in exile in their respective countries.

--To approach their respective governments and urge them to sincerely strive for the realization of independence of this country of ours by peaceful means, without any further delays, before we are all yet wiped out.

* * *

A CRY FOR FREEDOM

EDITORS' NOTE: Youth groups are encouraged to remember our fellow Namibian Christians in prayer, and also if possible by sharing our material possessions. Let us try and influence our governments to do more in order to restore freedom and dignity to the Namibian people. For those who want to know more about the situation in Namibia we recommend a 16mm film "NAMIBIA-a cry for freedom" produced by John Evenson from the Lutheran Church in America. For more information write to

Lutheran Church in America,
231 Madison Avenue,
New York, NY 10016
USA.

FRUSTRATING UPS AND DOWNS IN NAMIBIAN INDEPENDENCE PROCESS

Through the experience of witnessing political trials in Namibia, Ralston Deffenbaugh - an assistant in legal matters to the general secretary and expert on Southern Africa - became committed to the plight of the Namibian people. Deffenbaugh says that "you cannot stand by dispassionately and hear a death sentence read out or listen to a woman state in matter-of-fact terms how she was tortured by the police".

He went to Namibia in 1975-76 under a LWF study grant to observe trials and to research his law school thesis. Before coming to the LWF last year, Deffenbaugh worked as an attorney with a law firm in the U.S. He was also a member of the board of directors of Amnesty International USA, and chaired the Standing Committee on World Community of Lutheran World Ministries.

We find Ralie - as he is known to colleagues and friends - in his office on the third floor.

Ralie, is it true as reported in Time recently, that there has been some progress in the situation of Namibia?

It is very hard to say. There have been so many frustrating ups and downs with regard to the independence process. In 1978 people were very hopeful. When the UN Commissioner visited Namibia, huge crowds came out to greet him - hoping that he had come to fulfil the administrative responsibility of the UN and bring about independence. However, things did not go so well, resulting in many people being disappointed.

Again hopes were raised in January 1981 with the United Nations pre-implementation meeting here in Geneva, where South Africa and SWAPO met together with the Western Five (U.S., Britain, France, FRG and Canada) and the Front Line States also present. This was an attempt to pave the way for the implementation of UN resolution 435 calling for free and fair elections under UN supervision and control. At that time SWAPO (South West African People's Organization) agreed to a ceasefire, but South Africa backed out. Hopes fell, and then the Reagan administration took over.

It is true that there is more hope now than some months ago, but it is also true there is less hope than in January 1981. The parties are still far apart.

The church has during all this time stood firm and advocated that implementation of resolution 435 is the only way to a solution.

How would you then describe the situation in Namibia?

I think it has to be understood in two parts. First there is the Northern part of Namibia, Ovamboland, where half of the people live (the population of Namibia is only about one million). This part is relatively isolated from the rest of the country. And it is under intense military occupation by South Africa. The estimation is that somewhere between 50.000 and 100.000 soldiers are stationed there - which means one soldier to every ten people if the lower figure is used. There is really no semblance of normal life in this part, with a low level guerilla war being part of every day life. South Africa tries to prevent popular support of SWAPO, resulting in harassment and intimidation of the civil population. People are suffering very much.

They fear less the SWAPO solders who are mainly after the collaborators, while the South African soldiers, who do not know the language or people, sweep indiscriminately. Out of 300 Lutheran synod delegates meeting recently, 13% said that they had at one time or another been imprisoned or tortured.

The Southern part is more peaceful - there is not the same intense military occupation. Nonetheless the secret police are at work everywhere, and the country is slow in dismantling some of the apartheid structures. One particularly serious factor is the mandatory conscription. This is an especially dirty thing in a civil war because young men taken into the army suddenly face the situation that they have to fight their own people.

What can the churches do then to support the Namibians in their struggle?

One important thing is first of all to learn about the situation, to become informed. It is essential to study what has been said by the Namibian churches, and also to keep up with news sources like the LWI (Lutheran World Information). Being informed means that other churches can stay in solidarity with the Namibian Christians in prayer, in correspondence, but also in terms of advocacy with governmental organizations to try and influence official policy for the benefit of the Namibians.

I must say that there has also been a generous support from many Lutheran churches toward Namibia, and help and assistance have been extended to Namibian refugees in Angola and Zambia, and also other parts of the world. But there continues to be a tremendous need, and support is necessary. Especially giving educational opportunities at all levels is an important part of any assistance to Namibia.

(M O R E)

What is the relationship between SWAPO and the church?

Firstly it is to be said that there are two nation-wide groupings not controlled by South Africa: the church and SWAPO. 80% of the population is Christian; half the population is Lutheran. It is difficult to know exactly to what extent SWAPO has support among the population, but all observers agree that in a free election SWAPO would have majority support, and this means that there is a very large overlap between SWAPO and the church. Let me illustrate the point by quoting a question put to me by an official in the State Department in Washington: "Would it be fair to say that the Lutheran Church is SWAPO at prayer?

Is it not hypocrisy of the West when being so preoccupied with the freedom of Poland while showing no real will to put pressure on South Africa. Even the International Court in Hague has ruled that South Africa's occupation of Namibia is illegal.

Let me talk as an American citizen. I am ashamed that my government had its ambassador to the UN speak so strongly against the principle of sanctions when speaking about sanctions as against South Africa, stressing that sanctions do not work but when it comes to Poland, we go ahead and impose sanctions right away. That seems to me to be a double standard.

* * *

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF THEFT

Namibia is a classic case of an economy pillaged in the interests of foreigners. In the 19th century a population of less than half a million lived in a country considerably larger than France. Two groups moved in - European settlers who established huge cattle ranches, and foreign mining companies. Over 80,000 Namibians were killed as German forces established their rule and evicted those in the way. Black Namibians now lived mainly in the north, but rural poverty increasingly forced them south to work - ensuring a labour supply for the new enterprises.

As a result, Namibia today ranks among the ten richest African countries if the total value of annual production (GDP) is divided by the number of people. In practice, however, by far the largest share of this wealth - about three-fifths - goes straight to company profits or South African taxes on profit. Little is left for the majority of the people: the average income of black Namibians is no more than that of Tanzanians - though Namibia's annual production per head is six times that of Tanzania. Furthermore, blacks are almost entirely excluded from skilled or managerial posts (except as primary school teachers or nurses), there are only 5,000 Africans in the whole country who have completed secondary school.

The economy is extra-ordinarily oriented towards South Africa and the outside world. 90% of goods produced are exported. There is very little processing before export - even cattle are exported live. Manufacturing is tiny. 80% of goods consumed, including half the food, is imported. No other country exhibits such extremes.

(PROFILE NAMIBIA)

* * *

YOUTH DESK NOTES

by Alf Idland

Some of you may wonder whether anything happens within the Youth Desk at all. In order to facilitate communication about what is coming up, we will start a new column, YOUTH DESK NOTES, from this issue - trying to report on major developments. And we are open to your comments, also critical ones.

Of course, at present more is going on in exploration of possibilities and planning than the notes indicate - some things will have to be dropped, others will appear as notes in due time. But we hope these notes will help you to keep informed.

YOUTH LEADERS' CONFERENCES IN ASIA.

Follow-up actions have been taken in response to proposals made by youth participants at the Church Leaders' Meeting in Hong Kong in February 1981, of having subregional youth leaders' conferences during 1982.

A preparatory committee meeting was held in Taipei January 22-24 to prepare for the conference of the North East Asia region. A representative from Japan Isamu Aota of the JELC joined, while the Hong Kong representative, Yip Tai-cheong of the ELCHK, did not get a visa to come to Taiwan. Peter Yang and Nina Shen of the Taiwan Lutheran Church, and working at the Lutheran Student Center where the committee met, were representing Taiwan. Also the youth coordinator took part in the meeting.

(M O R E)

The conference to which two delegates from all the bigger Lutheran churches in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan and Korea will be invited, is scheduled to take place in the Taipei area August 14-19, 1982. It is anticipated that about 30-35 active youth leaders will gather for a time of sharing and discussion. Emphasis will be on strengthening the contact among the youth constituencies of the area and on how to relate in the future for instance through exchange programs and more active sharing. Problems affecting the region will be focused on, and also the question of expressing the Christian faith in indigenous elements and forms. Dr. Choong Chee Pang of Trinity Theological College will lead the Bible study session under the theme: Youth in Mission.

As to finances the churches/participants are encouraged to share as much as they can above a 1/4 minimum limit of the air fares. Accommodation and board will be provided on the LWF budget.

Peter Yang is chairing the local preparatory committee which is in charge of the further preparations.

February 22-24 a preparatory committee for the conference of the Philippines, Malaysia and India region met in Madras under the chairmanship of the former youth intern, Julius Paul of ELCMS. Since no report of the meeting has yet reached the youth desk, we shall report details in the next issue. The conference is anticipated to take place in the beginning of August.

YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN 1982 COMMISSION MEETINGS.

Both the department of studies (DC) and the department of communication are focusing on youth concerns in their commission meetings this year. Unfortunately the DS has not been able to get their youth adviser in time to get visa for East Germany (DDR) where the meeting is going to be held, so there will be no youth participation from outside. But a visitation program is preceding the meeting, and this will give the commission members and staff an opportunity to meet youth groups in various congregations in the DDR. Hopefully some youth participants from East Germany will be able to join the meeting. I will go as youth coordinator to have this chance of taking part in the visitation program - thus hopefully learn much about youth and youth work in the Lutheran church in the DDR.

The commission meeting of the DOC will be held in Brazil. Hopefully three youth participants from outside the region and two from the region will take part in the meeting. In addition comes the youth adviser. The following three items will be focused on:

1. Youth and communication within my culture and church
2. Media and youth: what do media do to youth and what does youth do with the media?
3. Youth and Christian communication: how could Christian media better reflect youth concerns? How could youth be directly involved in Christian communication at various levels, including actual production?

SELECTION OF YOUTH ADVISERS TO THE COMMISSION/EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

The following selections have been made upon recommendation by the Youth Task Force:

Executive Committee - Eleanor Sander, Canada
Department of Church Cooperation - Timothy Chere, South Africa
Department of Communication - Laurids Korsgaard, Denmark
Department of World Service - Peter Cancs, Hungary
Department of Studies - representative from Asia, not yet decided.

YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN THE STAVANGER CONSULTATION.

18-26 May 1982 the Department of Church Cooperation is holding a major consultation on Mission and Evangelism in Stavanger, Norway. About 130 delegates are expected to be in Stavanger.

Also youth participation is in principle ensured, though to date the youth participants who have registered, are in number about half of the scheduled figure. We hope that the number of youth participants will still increase with a few more.

Work being done for the youth participants to arrive some days earlier in order to have some time for preparation and also for some preliminary discussions and exchange on the Pre-Assembly Youth Gathering 1984.

PREPARATIONS FOR THE PRE-ASSEMBLY YOUTH GATHERING 1984.

A preparatory committee including representatives from the various regions, is in the process of being established. It is anticipated that the committee will meet this fall for a session of planning. Dates and place will be decided later.

VISITING NORTH EAST ASIA.

In connection with the preparatory committee meeting in Taipei, I also visited Hong Kong, Japan, Korea and Malaysia where I met with youth leaders as well as church leaders and discussed the LWF youth involvement in the region.

* * *

FROM HONG KONG TO TANZANIA

Mirium Chiu

I started to work with refugees here in Hong Kong for what was scheduled to last three months - I have now worked for three years. In April I am going to Tanzania to work within a refugee program there - and my stay is scheduled to last for one year, says the new youth intern within Department of World Service in an interview with Youth Newsletter.
We shall make no attempts of prophesying that the one year may develop into ten - but we are sure that those who benefit from Mirium's dedicated work would not regret her going on to be involved for many more years to come.

Mirium Chiu, born some 25 years ago, grew up in Hong Kong, got her education within the British system before going to Nebraska, U.S.A., to do studies in social work at Concordia Teachers' College. Being back in Hong Kong, she started her present work for the Indochinese Refugees' Program. Mirium is an active youth leader within her church, the Lutheran Church-Hong Kong Synod. She also participated in the All Asia Youth Leaders' Training Course, sponsored by the LWF and held in Port Dickson, Malaysia, May 1980.

From mid-April Mirium will come to Geneva for a brief stay before going to Tanzania where she will be involved as a youth intern within the programs that World Service is running there. This is a new and interesting development in the form that the internship has taken so far.

Mirium's main job within the Indochinese Refugees' Program has been to interview refugees who want to settle in the U.S. The agency's main task is processing refugees for resettlement in the U.S. She can tell us that in early January this year the agency could see off the 50.000th to the U.S. - not a small job for the group of a half hundred people at the height of the refugee stream, at present about 25 working for the agency.

(M O R E)

She can provide interesting insights into the psychology of people risking their lives for a future they do not know much about - and she can testify to the fact that even in this area of human tragedy there certainly are weeds among the wheat. This should of course not be used as an argument against increased efforts in solving the refugee problem - as sometimes can be heard expressed.

Mirium also gives examples of how some countries are extremely selective in their acceptance of refugees. But - says she - there are some good exceptions like Switzerland which has taken many handicapped people. Very often these people have great difficulties finding a country ready to accept them, even if the year (1981) was designated to be "the year of the handicapped". There is a wide gap between rhetoric in UN gatherings and reality.

- *What about youth and youth work in Hong Kong?*

  I think one of the main issues is materialism. To earn money becomes the one preoccupation, and then to spend it on food, clothes and leasure. There is a craze about brands - it is extremely important to dress up in fashionable clothes, to own bags and the like of a particular brand like Gucci. What counts is to be rich and famous - nobody cares how you have got your money.

Talking about the youth within the church, Mirium thinks that there is a disturbing tendency of escapism into spirituality. Young people are somtimes very eager to study the Bible and gather for prayer meetings, which of course is not bad. But then meeting somebody who is hungry, the reaction may be something like: "Oh, well, I will pray to God to give some bread". The faith has to be lived, to be expressed in life - insists the future youth intern who will have a chance to continue doing exactly that when she leaves her present work to become involved with people in real need on another continent.

* * *

VISIT OF AMERICAN YOUTH TO EAST GERMANY RESULTS IN SHATTERED IMAGES

by Timothy Wilcox

(Wilcox is assistant editor of the Lutheran Standard, in which this article first appeared.)

They crossed the border, rolling by train into what they thought would be a different world. Peering wide-eyed out of the windows, each compared the passing scenes with his or her expectations. Then one of them spoke up: "I dont know if everything looks so gray because of the clouds or because of what we've heard about the country."

They had heard that the German Democratic Republic (GDR), or East Germany, is the most radical and militaristic of communist East Bloc countries. They had heard its people described either as captives or puppets of a repressive socialist state, trapped in a spiritually barren land.

The GDR--home for 17 million people--does limit some individual freedom as the Berlin Wall demonstrates. But some stereotypes of the GDR and its people are false and distorted. At least that's now the opinion of the 15 American young adults and their three leaders--those wide-eyed train passengers who recently shared a month-long "Living and Learning Experience" in the GDR.

Roots of the trip, can be traced to the 1979 American Lutheran Church Youth gathering in Kansas City, Missouri. There the "idea for a "youth visitation project" took shape and seed money was set aside. Arrangements for the trip to the GDR were made by Lutheran World Ministries (LWM) in New York City and the national committee of the the Lutheran World Federation in the GDR. Out of 100 applicants for the trip, 15 young adults--ages 18-25--were chosen to represent a variety of work, study, and family background.

"That diversity was a tremendous plus," says the Rev. Dave Wold, ALC director of youth ministries and one of the three trip leaders. "A sense of who we are as citizens of the United States and Canada was transmitted effectively because of it." Communicating this "sense of who we are" was a key purpose of the Living and Learning Experience. With their itineraries arranged by GDR Lutheran church leaders, the visitors divided into six groups and traveled around the country with surprising freedom. They stayed in the homes of East German Christians and talked at length with believers and non-believers alike.

In small-group and one-to-one encounters, they asked and answered vital questions: What's it like to live in a communist country? How can you be a Christian here? Do you have to make any sacrifices? Is it true that just about everyone in the United States is rich? Doesn't capitalism, as a system, work against Jesus' teachings about wealth and care for the poor? How can you be a Christian and a capitalist too? Why do our countries threaten each other with war? Such questions led to intense and sometimes unsettling personal

(M O R E)

sharing--the heart of what Dr. Paul Wee, LWM general secretary, says was "a bold experiment in living together that resulted in an often surprising shattering of false images."

Says Nadine Lehr,22, a senior at Concordia College in Moorhead, Minnesota, "I heard how gray the GDR is, how lifeless its people are, how they all wanted out. But the people there are very much like us, and these stereotypes were generally inacurate." Jonathan Strom,19, from St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota, also expected everything to be gray and lifeless. "I thought the people would be so tired and oppressed, that they'd hardly be alive. I was surprised to find out that wasn't true." Allie Laurie Jr., 20, a voice student at the Cleveland Institute of Music, says that my biggest misconception was "that they all wanted to leave the country forever and live in the West-the perfect place. Most of the people I met loved their country, and few talked about leaving."

According to Wold most Christians in the GDR "have a strong sense of responsibility and feel they're called to voice a critical word about wrongs they see in their society." Christians in the GDR-where Protestants, mostly Lutheran, outnumber Roman Catholics 8 million to 1 million- are not happy about the antireligious policies of their government. In the past, many were imprisoned for speaking out too boldly about such policies. More recently, many have lost educational or career opportunities for identifying too closely with the church.

But Christians in the GDR are not groaning under systematic and severe persecution. As one GDR church leader told the visitors: "We have a lot of religious freedom here. We don't have to meet secretly in basements or smuggle Bibles into the country. We even have Christian bookstores." "The big difference between you and us," he said, "is that we have to grab freedom--and sometimes pay a price for it."

The outspoken and active faith of GDR Christians "showed me how apathetic I've been," says Craig Johnson, 25, from the University of Wisconsin. "It's so easy to slip into comfortable Christianity, not caring about other people or world issues." Among these issues, according to Johnson, is peace. One of his most memorable moments during the trip came at the end of an evening spent with two Marxist professors. As one of them left, his parting words were, "Please tell your people we don't want any war."

Says Johnson: "It hit me then that he was one of the 'bad guys'-people I'd somehow learned to fear-and they wanted peace!" Several trip participants reported that the people they met want nothing to do with war. "Especially in the church, where there's a strong peace movement, they taught me how important it is to speak out against the arms build-up," says Allie Laurie.

Some of the others also were "educated" by East Germans. Nadine Lehr "never heard them say, 'I wish I had this or that.' Most of them live very simply, especially compared to us. We have so much," she says, "but we are never satisfied." Dave Wold agrees: "Our preoccupation with materialism is embarrassing. So is the way we're manipulated by advertising. We simply have to have so many things." Asks Wold: "When will we learn to say 'Enough is enough?'

* * *

NEWS :

STUDY FINDS GERMAN YOUTH SHUN WORSHIP SERVICES

Only two percent of Protestants aged 16 to 29 in the Fed. Republic of Germany attended worship services regularly in 1980, according to a survey of the Allensbach-based Institute for Opinion Research. The Evangelical Press Service (EPD) reports that in 1968 there were still 11 percent of the Protestant youth going to church almost every Sunday. The survey indicates that only one-fifth of the 16-29-year-old West Germans have grown up in a "religious" home. Despite the large participation of youth at last year's Hamburg Kirchentag (church festival held every two years) there are no indications of youth returning to the church, the survey says. On the contrary, their indifference and pessimism is increasing.

The Allensbach institute reports that what turns off the youth is a "failure of Christianity," in view of the evil in this world and the wealth of the church. As a domain of the church, youth recognize the engagement for the disadvantaged and statements on basic questions such as euthanasia. Only one in five expects answers on "questions of our time" from the church, such as poverty and euthanasia; 14 percent granted the church co-determination in educational questions; statements during election time were totally refused, the institute shows. The youth said the main task of Christians is to deal with themselves. The survey found a very positive reaction to ecumenical activities of the church.

* * * (Lutheran World Information)

BRAZILIAN CHURCHES TO SUPPORT PEASANTS

The Brazilian churches want to support the peasants of their country more than before, according to Tania Krutschka, information secretary in the Evangelical Church of Lutheran Confession in Brazil (ECLCB). Recently the ecumenical committee "commissao Pastoral da Terra," which includes the Brazilian Roman Catholic Church and the ECLCB, again pointed to the worsening situation in rural areas. The committee noted that some 226,000 families (more than 1 million people) are now threatened with expulsion by "the huge national and foreign capital interests," by landowners and also by federal and state governments. They are to be driven away from an area of 28 million hectares, the committee reported. The public should be aware that 133 foreign companies own more than 26 million hectares (64.2 million acres) in Brazil, the committee said.

During this coming year the Protestant churches in Brazil are focusing on the situation of the peasants. They have chosen the theme "God's earth, land for everybody" for their work this year. It is planned to support hundreds of thousands of peasants in the rural areas and in the urban slums of Brazil. The peasants will be urged to take their own initiative to improve their situation.

(Lutheran World Information)

* * *

COUNTRIES OF THE SOUTH SUPPORT WORLD-WIDE NEGOTIATIONS

Global negotiations in the United Nations (UN) and increasing the South-South cooperation were the two main themes of a conference of representatives from 44 developing countries in New Delhi earlier this month. It was noted that President Reagan's development policy is orientated toward own national interests and thus has destroyed a number of illusions. As the United States do not want to have global negotiations in a central committee, but only in a specialized organization of the UN system, the Southern countries proposed a new pre-conference. They want world-wide negotiations as far as possible, and consider American proposals to be a deceleration tactic.

Plans for a Southern-Southern cooperation were already drawn up at the Arusha Confernce in 1979 and at a Caracas conference. Among these are plans to build own transnational cooperations and having funds for financing rural development and industrialization projects. Although practicallynothing has been put into practice, the New Delhi conference made new plans. Among the reasons for the difficulties in implementing some of the plans are the various different interests of the Southern countries. The oil-importing states, for example, are looking for investments from OPEC-states, which have a lot of money. Other countries, which have a lack of food, look for agricultural cooperation; and countries with a partly developed industrialized basis,e.g. India, try to sell their technology to other developing countries.

Unity can only be found if all interests are combined. But if all the needs and demands are combined it results in an overload blocking even small negotiation steps. Some critical voices from the South were aimed at the small increase of OPEC development aid compared to aid coming from the North.

* * *

FROM "BABYLONICAL" TO "CAPITALISTIC" CAPTIVITY

(Note: This is a summary of an article by Swiss Pastor Kurt Flückiger, which was first published in the Swiss Protestant Press Service. It is based on a survey of parishes in Swiss towns, and villages.)

The one-sided importance of "security"and the idea of proclamation and ministerial work does not help the process of building bridges between the church and the world, between faith and technocracy, between the Gospel and politics and being Christian and having a responsibility for the world. Sermons cannot fulfill the hermeneutic task of theological-psychological-sociological actualization. This is indicated by a recent survey in Swiss churches.

The churches are anxious about rich people leaving the church and are afraid of discussing subjects that are relevant to society, like atomic power, militarism and the peace movement. Proclamations that are critical of society are mistrusted up to a point of character assasination. What is the motivation behind this? Is it the concentration on the so-called "essential things" like religion, ministry and liturgy?

Already in the last century it was said that the division of labor and the increasingly anonymous producing and consuming society will lead to a separation of religion and the church, even in the private life. The other side of this: Powerful and dominating structures will be determined by inherent laws and will become decraesingly transparent.

Jean Baptiste Metz (MÜnster, Fed. Republic of Germany) dealt with the question of "Bourgoisie and Christian faith." His main thesis can be described as following: The middle classes have no spontaneous positive relationship to the event of revelation, which is constitutive for the existence and presence of the church. Where is the origin of the scandal of the gospel? Does it come from the appearance of some "troublesome" preachers and activists? Doesn't it have its origin in the "strange" word of God in Jesus Christ, in the "strange" impact of the Good News in this world?

Luther exposed the "babylonical captivity" as a danger for the church in his famous writings. Today we experience the "capitalist captivity" of the church. During Luther's time there was a tendency for the freedom of Christians and churches going down under the centralistic and absolute power of the pope. Today the openness of the Christian witness is endangered of being smothered by a world of science, technology, industry and economy. If, in this situation, congregations would live and act in a more missionary way, not only movement and disputes would be experienced, but also reconciliation and community.

* * *

PEACE ACTIVITIES BETWEEN EAST AND WEST OVER THE PAST FEW MONTHS

.....Since last year there are many peace activities, for example big demonstrations, taking place all over Europe. Since the end of November, 1981, the Soviet Union and the USA have been meeting twice a week for negotiations on disarmament in Geneva. The foreign ministers of these two powers met in Geneva early this year, but because of tensions due to the introduction of martial law in Poland on Dec.13,1981, they only had a very brief day-long session. Top political representatives of the two Germanies exchanged their points of view last December. A gathering of 100 authors and scientists from East and West Germany in East Berlin, which focused on peace issues, was later described as very successful and there will be a follow-up in May. Although the talks at the Conference of Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) meeting in Madrid reflect the difficult East-West situation, they are still being continued.

There are also various peace activities in the churches. The grass-root level work of the churches is very strong, and also high level meetings were and will be organized. This coming May an interreligious conference is scheduled to take place in Moscow. Swedish Archbishop Olof Sundby has called for an all-Christian peace conference in Stockholm early next year. Another proposal comes from the Archbishop of Canterbury, who wants to invite representatives of all Christian confessions and religions for a peace summit. At the end of 1981 Lutheran bishops from Northern and Eastern countries met to discuss the issue of peace. The World Council of Churches staged a public hearing on disarmament questions.....

* * *

WORLD-WIDE TRADE IN MAJOR WEAPONS DURING THE 1970s - THE FLOW OF ARMS: GENERAL TRENDS

In particular during the 1970s, the international trade in arms expanded dramatically; the arms market is now one of exceptional size for a period with no direct great-power confrontation. The expansion is four-fold - in volume, in number of importing countries, in the change to sophisticated weapon systems and in the transfer of military know-how for setting up domestic arms production facilities.

Of the SIPRI trend indicator total for the 1970s, as much as 74.3 per cent of all major weapon transfers were made to Third World countries, as compared to 25.7 per cent within the industrialized world. There is no sign that the trend will level off. On the contrary, the beginning of the 1980s will show an increase of investments in conventional weapons due to decisions taken by the NATO countries in late 1979. In particular, the share of the industralized world can therefore be expected to grow.

The United States has throughout the 1970s accounted for 45 per cent of the supply of major weapons to Third World countries. According to the US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA) , the total US share of the export of military equipment is close to 50 per cent. The SIPRI trend indicator attributes to the United States a share of 43 per cent for the three years 1977-79, among the world-wide 43 major arms exporters, including those exporting to the industrialized world.

The Soviet Union remains the second largest individual arms supplier in the world, accounting for about 27 per cent during the 1970s, according to the SIPRI indicator for major arms deliveries to the Third World, and, according to ACDA, for 30 per cent of total arms exports, 70 per cent of which goes to the developing nations.

Grouping the arms suppliers on a political basis, the international arms trade remains very much a Western affair: during the 1970s NATO countries were responsible for 66 per cent of total major weapon supplies, compared to 28 per cent for the WTO countries (see table 3.1).

During the 1970s, West European arms producers became serious competitors to the two great powers, selling to both US and Soviet clients. In some types of equipment, West European suppliers even dominate, for example, as regards helicopters (such as the Alouette versions), anti-tank missiles (such as MILAN and HOT), and electronics and communication equipment. Many West European producers are particularly competitive in land warfare armaments.

RANK ORDER OF MAJOR WEAPON EXPORTERS TO THE THIRD WORLD, 1970-79
(Figures are SIPRI trend indicator values, as expressed in constant US$ million, at constant 1975 prices)

Exporting country	Total value	Percentage of Third World total
1. USA	27,727	45
2. USSR	16,914	27.5
3. France	5,894	10
4. UK	3,044	5
5. Italy	1,868	3
6. Third World exporters*	1,805	3
7. FR Germany	1,444	2.3

* China is excluded because the figures are very unreliable.

TRENDS IN WORLD MILITARY EXPENDITURE OUTSIDE THE POWER BLOCS (EXCLUDING NATO AND THE WTO) 1970-79* - Annual average per cent changes in real terms.

Main regions		Other groupings	
Middle East	13.5	Southern Africa	15.5
Africa	7.5	OPEC	15
Far East (excl.China)	7	Non-oil developing countries:	
Latin America	5	High-income	7.5
South Asia	4	Medium-income	6.5
Other Europe	3.5	Low-income	3.5
Oceania	0.5	Total	6

* China is excluded because the figures are very unreliable.

* * *

WORSHIP TO GOD WITHOUT CARE FOR THE POOR IS BLASPHEMIC SERVICE

(NOTE: Summary of South African Bishop Tutu's speech on award of honorary doctor in November 1981. He was not permitted to go to Bochum, FR Germany. Another South African theologian read his speech.)

European theology has neglected the multiplicity of theologies all over the world and has ignored its own context. Every theology will be particular in trying to bring a meaning into the life of one special part of the Christian family. The last reference point always has to be the human being Jesus.

Already in the Old Testament one can find contrary theological positions: in Genesis I-II, or Jona and Ruth in contrast to Nehemia and Esra. All try to speak for one particular situation.

Not in academical study rooms, but in suffering some of the best theologies were developed. Concrete problems have initiated them. For example the circumcision of Christian Jews, or: why did Jews crucify the Messias? What about the victory of Jesus and the suffering of Christians? Western theologies tried too long to be universal. They had wonderful answers to questions that they never had been asked for. Today there are new theologies who try to manage the matters that really move them, e.g. in Latin America and South Africa and the USA.

For them the classical doctrine of God isn't so important. Neither God's omnipotence nor his love or his existence are matters of interest. But if all that is true, why does suffering hit some single black people so remarkably? God, on what side are you standing, on whose side? - One should accept the honesty of every effort for interpreting different aspects of the Bible, in different contexts.

One vogue word of the last years was "the world gives to the church the agenda". Away from an unhealthy orientation to the "beyond". "So God has loved the world," and not the church. We don't believe in the immortality of the souls, but we believe in the resurrection of the body. God created the world. "And he was pleased with what he saw". But don't revile the church. Jesus Christ loved the church - Eph. 5,25-27. The church is the body of Christ, the temple of the Holy Spirit. The church is holy, but consisting of sinful people. It is sinful, fallible and weak.

The church includes all races, dead and living people, it is catholic, it's service is reconciliation. It proclaims the domination of God over all areas of life: the political, economical and social areas. Our civic rights are in heaven. Never the church is allowed to bless a status quo or to confirm to it. God always shows new lines of sight.

On South Africa: the church must keep awake the hope against discouragement. The powers become more unrestrained than ever, it seems there is no solution without bloodshed. Inspite of that: this is God's world. Right and injustice are really what matters, and the resurrection confesses: right will gain victory. God is at the side of the oppressed. Jesus washed the feet of his followers. The church has to let go itself for others. It mustn't get conceded privileges; worship to God without care for the poor is a useless and blasphemic service.

The church will suffer, because it has to serve the neighbours. That is its identity. It's trustworthyness the church must deserve. Eph. 1,18-23. We are never alone.

(From Lutherische Monatshefte 1/82).

* * *

FEED-BACK WANTED URGENTLY!

We, the editors, again want to appeal for replies, answers, comments, articles, etc. for the Youth Newsletter. For us it is vitally important to include as many stories from readers as possible. We are interested in a two-way communication! It is important to know, for example, if we are able to stimulate discussions with some of the things we print. Is there some truth in Matthias' editorial on page 2? Can youth fulfill the role Dr. Bengu is expecting them to play on page 3. Our address is

Youth Newsletter
Department of Church Cooperation
150, route de Ferney
1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland

LETTER TO THE EDITOR: WHAT HAPPENS TO YOUTH RECCOMENDATIONS?

by the Rev. Nyemah Tyee

It was in Oct. 1978, that the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) decided to have an "All Africa Lutheran Consultation on Christian theology and Christian education in the African context" in Gaborone, Botswana. The LWF invited a number of Third World Lutheran youth representatives. I happened to be Liberia's youth representative. I was happy as it was only the second time that I left my country.

Under the theme "Contextualize theology in an African context" the youth participants met to discuss some of the issues which are of great concern for the Africans. After two days of intensive and fruitful discussions with the Rev. Ronald Diggs from Liberia and the Rev. Risto Lehtonen, director of the LWF department of church cooperation, we presented some recommendations to the consultation, which were later on approved by the participants. The recommendations were:

--that the youth have representatives on the regional research and study teams;
--that the method of teaching in our theological seminaries be reconsidered and organized in such a way as to meet the needs and aspirations of the youth and to make them think creatively and critically;
--that students and faculties exchange programs be established on the African continent so as to broaden our scope in African theology and appreciation of other African cultures.

I have seen none of these recommendations put into practice. As one of the strong supporters of these recommendations let me throw light onto each of them. In the first recommendation we are saying that research means looking for. What they are looking for is to contextualize African theology in an African context, and we need youth input in this.

With regard to the second recommendation: Our African seminaries are highly staffed with white missionaries. This does not mean that whites are not good theological teachers. But their examples and comparisons will be based on a Western background. Nobody will blame them, because this is the understanding from which they come. What we are saying is that if the teaching were to be reorganized African youth would be more creative and critical.

The third recommendation calls for an exchange of teachers as well as students in an African setting. If all these recommendations were implemented we would have a sound theology in an African context. But instead they are skillfully placed in books and nobody bothers about them.

* * *

LETTER TO THE EDITOR:

by Paul Christianson

(NOTE: Paul was among the American Lutheran youth, who visited East Germany last year. See also report on page . Unfortunately his letter arrived very late, and we can thus only print excerpts from it.)

...One result of our stay there(in the German Democratic Republic) is an exchange of letters between us and youth in the GDR. They are hungry for information and want to share their Christian experience with us. If anyone reading this letter is interested in sharing his/her faith with an East German youth and is relatively fluent in German send me a letter and I'll send you a name.

Send to: Paul Christianson
3924 Upton Avenue South
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55410 USA

My experiences gave me a new impression of the GDR. We found the East Germans to be very much like us. They were joyful people anxious to share the gospel with us. They weren't the warmongers I might have expected to meet.

'PEACE NOW' TO BE THEME OF SWEDISH YOUTH GATHERING

The Church of Sweden's youth organization is planning a youth gathering for this summer. It will have the theme "Peace is now," which will be divided into four sub-themes: Peace with God; peace in the congregation; peace with each other and peace in the world. The gathering will be held in Skévdé, in the western part of Sweden, from August 4 to 8. Participants from all over the world are invited to attend.

Prior to the gathering there will be a workshop (Aug.2-4) dealing with the same theme. Following the gathering international participants will have the possibility to stay with a family in a congregation of the Skara diocese. The cost of the gathering will be a 130 Swedish "kronor," (US$ 23).

If you have any questions, feel free to contact: Eva Christina Hansson
Church of Sweden Youth-RKU
Box 104 S-193 00 SIGTUNA
Sweden Tel. 0760-501 80 or 018-12 10 87

* * *